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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the present system of American television broadcasting reveals that social and behavioral science has had very limited influence on its regulatory policymaking. The television advertisement and its potential adverse effect on children have come to the attention of federal regulatory bodies, as well as consumer and children advocacy groups. However, there is a lack of evaluation of effectiveness of present and alternative regulatory stipulations. It is in the nonregulatory sphere that social and behavioral science has a major influence. It could guide decisionmaking in the television industry regarding self-regulation, and improve its service to the public. One such example is the family viewing code accepted by the industry, which has curtailed the amount of violence and sex in prime-time programs. It is suggested that empirical evidence generated from social and behavioral science research could further influence industry action, and validate the rulings made by the broadcast standards departments, thus enhancing the public welfare. (SC)

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE IN POLICYMAKING FOR TELEVISION

by

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THE ROLE OF SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE IN POLICYMAKING FOR TELEVISION

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The potential role of social and behavioral science in policymaking for television is large. Although it has had scant influence to date in federal regulatory action, there are numerous possibilities for future application and its relevance in policymaking outside the sphere of formal regulation is great.

THE POLICY ARENA

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) are the two major agencies involved in the regulation of broadcasting. The principal agency is the FCC, whose sphere includes the allocation of spectrum space among uses (such as educational vs. commercial broadcasting), the licensing of broadcasters, the determination of the prerogatives of broadcast television vs. such alternatives as pay and cable, and, to a very limited degree, certain aspects of content. The FTC has the narrower task of protecting consumers from deception, misrepresentation, and other foul play in television advertising.

However, the arena of television policymaking is much broader than regulatory rulemaking. The actors and topics can be distinguished in terms of two related dimensions: (a) the target of action, or structural vs. social effects policymaking, and (b) the source of action, or regulatory vs. nonregulatory policymaking. Let us examine the resulting types:

Type One: Structural Policymaking

Decisions order the physical, economic, and operational makeup of the industry. Principal actors are the FCC and the Congress, which stipulates the framework within which the FCC functions. The prototype of congressional boundary-setting for the FCC is the Communications Act of 1934, which created the agency. The White House Office of Telecommunications Policy, the industry, and various other bodies play a role through the formulation of or support or opposition to proposed steps.

Type Two: Social Effects Policymaking

Decisions are intended to affect the content of what is broadcast, and derive from presumed effects on viewers. The foremost example is violence, typically assumed to have undesirable effects. Others include public service programming (encouraged), obscenity (discouraged), and advertising (which must meet certain criteria). The focus of policy is the barring or alteration of the character or frequency of some class of content. The principal actor is the industry itself, through its self-regulatory procedures and its decisionmaking about programming. However, the FTC and the FCC have a limited regulatory role. Furthermore, Congress and various citizen groups, ranging from consumer advocacy groups to those of religious and moral commitment, influence policy by generating pressures to which the industry and the regulatory agencies respond.

Type Three: Regulatory Policymaking

Decisions involve the stipulation of behavior for the industry by statute or regulatory rulemaking. The principal actors are the FCC, the FTC, and the Congress. Various other parties, and in particular the industry, influence decisions by support or opposition. The great majority of regulatory decisions involve structural policymaking, but there is a limited amount of social effects policymaking.

Type Four: Nonregulatory Policymaking

Decisions are intended to influence programming and advertising outside of formal regulation. A principal actor is the industry through its self-regulatory procedures and programming decisions. Others are the FCC, the FTC, the Congress, various citizen groups, and the public at large, whose varied displeasures the industry seeks to avoid.

Policymaking in regard to television thus involves the whole range of parties whose actions influence the behavior of the industry, and the clientele for policy-relevant social and behavioral research is very broad. The relationships between these four types, with examples of decisionmaking, are shown in Table 1 and the principal actors and their primary roles are shown in Table 2. The actors include the federal regulatory bodies, the television industry in all its diversity, the viewing public, including the noisome advocacy groups, and various interventionist bodies. The regulators make the rules, the industry responds, the public and the interventionist bodies react, and the industry and the regulators respond to the new situation. The process is continual.

REGULATORY POLICYMAKING

There are a host of reasons why social and behavioral science has played little part in regulatory policymaking. However, no single factor is more responsible than the framework of economic contention in which such policymaking occurs.

Whatever the declared issue, the stakes are access to income. Those affected are affected economically. This is true whether at issue is the right to be in business, exemplified by licensing or the required duties and stipulated prerogatives of business conduct.

The controversies over statutory action by Congress are given new voice in the stage-set court of FTC and FCC rulemaking. The rulemaking process is contentious and adversarial. The outcome is open to judicial appeal because the various parties whose rights to present and future income are at issue must be assured of "due process."

Table 1

Targets and Sources of Television Policymaking

Target of Action	Source of Action: Regulatory	Source of Action: Nonregulatory
Structural	. FCC grants and reviews license to broadcast . FCC decides on outlets permissible in market . FCC sets rules on common newspaper-TV station ownership in same market	. Foundations and government give financial support to public television . Advocacy group challenges station license renewal
Social Effects	. Congress prohibits cigarette commercials . FCC enforces Fairness Doctrine and equal time requirement . FTC sets criteria to police false and misleading advertising	. Industry adopts "family viewing" code . Networks rule on acceptability of program content . Advocacy groups seek reduction in advertising on children's programming

Table 2

PRINCIPAL ACTORS IN TELEVISION POLICYMAKING

Principal Actors	Kind of Decisionmaking
Federal Regulatory Bodies	
FCC FTC Congress	Stipulate rules to which industry must conform.
Television Industry	
Networks Affiliate stations Independent stations Advertising industry Producers/writers	Respond to regulatory stipulations, threats of regulation, and actions of public and interventionist bodies, sometimes by formal self-regulation, often implicitly in daily decisionmaking.
Viewing Public	
Advocacy groups General public	Create context of opinion and litigation in which industry and regulatory bodies function.
Interventionist Bodies	
Educational system Private foundations Government agencies	Respond to industry performance by subsidizing public television or by sponsoring research on television's social role.

The model adhered to by the agencies is that of the judicial process, with the filing of briefs by interested parties, the arguing of cases, and a strong reliance on precedents established in previous rulings.

In this context, the eventual impact on the television experience of the viewer, although the justification of regulation, is remote enough for cursory attention to take the place of detailed scrutiny. The "public" as a mythical person is easier to deal with than an aggregate of statistics whose disposal as more or less consistent with the "public welfare" is likely to be problematical. The immediate questions the decisionmakers face concern the law, economics, and technology. The inhospitality of the milieu is testified to by the fact that typically the staffs at the FTC and FCC have not included social and behavioral scientists, there typically has been no in-house effort at expert evaluation of any relevant findings, and social and behavioral science typically has been introduced, if at all, through the arguments of contending parties.

New Issues

In the mid-1970s, the influence of television advertising on children and adolescents became a topic of debate. Because advertising is believed by many not to enjoy the same protective deference as news, public affairs, and entertainment, new regulatory issues were raised.

Special Status of Advertising. Although the exact boundaries of FCC and FTC powers over broadcast content are ambiguous, the widely accepted interpretation is:

- The FCC is specifically restricted from attempting to regulate program content by its founding statute, the Communications Act of 1934. However, it has in fact done so to a very limited degree by taking into account the quantity of public service programming in license renewal, by its

application of the Fairness Doctrine (which calls for full airing of all sides of a controversial issue), and by the equal time requirement which specifies that political candidates for an office be given access on an equal basis.

- o The FCC is further constrained by the First Amendment, whose "freedom of speech" guaranty is judged by most lawyers to extend to all categories of program content within the limits imposed by the Fairness Doctrine and equal time requirement.
- o There are no statutory restrictions nor, in the opinion of most lawyers, does the protection of the First Amendment extend to advertising to the same degree as to program content.

The likelihood is that television advertising will become increasingly the subject of attention by the FCC and FTC, and that programming will continue to be largely avoided by the FCC, although the overturn, pending appeal, of "family viewing" has introduced new pressures for regulatory restraints on programming.

Old Topic, New Questions. Television advertising is no newcomer to the policy arena. Although attempts to legislate or regulate the quantity of commercials have failed because of industry opposition (Jones, 1967; Barnouw, 1975), deception, an FTC concern, has been getting increasing attention (Emery, 1971), and the campaign against cigarette commercials (eventually banned by Congress) introduced the precedent of the FCC requiring counter-commercials under the Fairness Doctrine.

The new focus is owed to the advocacy groups, principally Action for Children's Television and Robert Choate and his Council on Children, Media and Merchandising. In the early 1970s, they challenged the propriety of directing advertising at children who may be emotionally and intellectually ill-prepared to evaluate calculated attempts at persuasion and the nutritional value of cereals and other food products designed to appeal to children. Partial victories were won by the reduction by the industry of the quantity of advertising on children's programming and by the

nutritional upgrading of cereals. By the mid-1970s, the debate had widened to include the advertising of over-the-counter drugs and of beer and wine, and the degree and type of new protection, if any, required by young viewers.

The result of these efforts created a new set of questions in regard to the effects of broadcast content to be addressed by social and behavioral science. They include:

- o The degree to which children fail to perceive television advertising as a calculated attempt to induce behavior of benefit to the communicator.
- o The frequency with which expectations over foodstuffs, toys, or clothing are raised or shaped by television advertising beyond what the product, once purchased, can deliver.
- o The extent to which children are motivated by television advertising to pressure parents to make purchases that otherwise would not be made.
- o The degree to which food preferences and dietary practices, not only in the immediate present but more importantly in later life, are shaped by television advertising toward foodstuffs doubtful in their contribution to health, such as items low in nutritional value or high in sugar or cholesterol.
- o The degree to which the advertising on television of over-the-counter, proprietary drugs encourages young people to abuse these licit drugs or engage in the consumption of illicit drugs, either in the immediate present or in later life.
- o The degree to which alcohol consumption or abuse by young persons is influenced by alcoholic beverage commercials (restricted by industry code to beer and wine) or by portrayals of alcohol consumption in drama (where there are no bars against hard liquor).
- o The degree to which the television advertising of household products dangerous when employed in play, such as certain cleaning substances, encourages children to experiment with them.

- o The degree to which the exposure of young people to the implied promise in television commercials of social or emotional benefit from purchase engenders materialistic or unrealistic values and attitudes.
- o The degree to which very early and then continuing exposure of children to television advertising leads, with their increasing comprehension of the self-interested nature of commercials, to skepticism about all public communications.
- o The portion of the young audience which can be said to attend to and understand the sales messages of television commercials.

A central issue is the portion of the broadcast day in which children's reactions are relevant. There are probably always at least a few child viewers. When are they important? The present National Association of Broadcasters code provisions on children and advertising apply only when the advertising is directed at children, the program is intended for children, and children are a majority of the audience. As much as nine-tenths of children's viewing occurs when these criteria do not apply.

Some argue that policies directed at specific age levels are not practical because of the heterogeneous nature of the television audience. Yet, it is precisely such a policy that NAB now follows and the FCC apparently endorses (Federal Communications Commission, 1974) in applying certain strictures only to programming and advertising specifically directed at children at times when children make up a majority of the audience. Rather than concluding from the impossibility of perfect application of an age-specific policy that any such policy is impractical, the more justifiable response would be the analysis of audience patterns by age to determine the number of children and hours of programming that might be affected by various alternative prohibitions based on the number of children of a certain age in the audience. Then--and only then--would it be time to judge the practicality of such a policy on the basis of empirical evidence of its likely effectiveness.

The Drug Debate. In 1976, Massachusetts State Attorney General Francis X. Bellotti, with the support of 18 other state attorneys general, asked the FCC to ban over-the-counter drug advertising prior to 9 p.m. to protect children. The petition cited numerous studies ostensibly demonstrating the influence of television on the thought and behavior of children and adolescents. The response of the government was to convene FCC-FTC fact-finding hearings to review the state of scientific knowledge on the effects of exposure to drug advertising on licit and illicit drug consumption and abuse.

At the center of attention was a three-and-a-half year longitudinal study of 13-15 year-old boys sponsored by NBC (Milavsky, Pekowsky, and Stipp, 1975). The principal finding was that exposure to drug advertising was unrelated to later illicit drug use, but was positively although modestly related to licit (over-the-counter) drug use, although the absence of data on whether or not such consumption was inappropriate to symptoms did not permit any inference about whether it constituted "abuse." Those concerned over the effects of drug advertising argued that the NBC study should not be considered definitive because it did not answer the question of licit drug abuse or very long-term effects. Ironically, no one seemed to notice that these data could answer such questions if the original sample were resurveyed to obtain data on the role of symptomatology in licit drug consumption and on longer-range effects.

The Bellotti petition was rejected for lack of supporting empirical evidence. However, one can imagine the pressure that would have been generated by empirical evidence of a causal connection between drug abuse and exposure to drug advertising. The failure of the FCC-FTC hearings to lead to a regulatory stipulation is neither surprising nor important. Their importance is that they demonstrate the potential of scientific evidence of social fact as a precursor to regulatory decisionmaking.

The future direction and scope of regulatory action cannot be predicted, particularly because it will occur in the context of self-regulatory steps by the industry that may substitute for (and

often be in response to threat of) regulation. However, there is no reason to think that in the long-run the issues will be confined to the young because at the root is the viewer's presumed vulnerability, a state not exclusive to any age group.

Evaluation of Outcomes

There is also an unrealized potential for social and behavioral science in evaluating the outcomes of rulemaking and of industry practices that in some way might become subject to regulation. There are three kinds of questions which such evaluation may address:

- o The effectiveness of present regulatory stipulations and policies.
- o The effectiveness of various alternative regulatory steps.
- o The effectiveness of industry practices, such as in self-regulation, where regulatory action might be appropriate.

Present Policies. At any time, current regulations may be subjected to an empirical test of whether they are achieving their intended effects. An example of the evaluation of existing regulatory practice is a recent study that found a community's knowledge of local public affairs positively related to presence of a television station within the community (Lucas and Possner, 1975). This finding provides important support for the FCC concept of local ownership providing special benefits but also raises the question of what might be done to insure local news coverage for communities now without stations.

Alternative Steps. Regulatory action inevitably represents a selection from among alternatives. To make the choice evidence should be reviewed and new research sometimes undertaken. It is in this vein that NSF sponsored an evaluation of the evidence on the effects of common ownership of different media--such as a daily newspaper and television station--within a market, particularly in regard to fairness and completeness of news coverage. The study concluded that "most questions about the effects of media ownership concentration on media performance must be answered with the well-known Scotch verdict 'Not proved!'" (Baer et al., 1974). On the surface, this is inconclusive. However, when interpreted in the context of the evolution of

FCC decisionmaking toward the view that multiple ownership of television and other media in a market is prima facie undesirable because of the risk of one-sided news coverage or other advantage-taking, it provides considerable guidance by demonstrating that there is no evidence that clear benefits are sacrificed when concentration is discouraged.

Industry Practices. The evaluation of industry practices as a prelude to possible regulatory action is also a possible use of social and behavioral science. For example, the NAB code requires "positive disclosure" of items which must be purchased separately, including batteries and accessories, and encouragement of "recognized standards of safety," which in some instances implies warnings of possible hazards (National Association of Broadcasters, 1975; U.S. Congress, 1975). It is reasonable to ask for evidence that such requirements result in advertising that in fact is more informative for parents and children and evidence that hazard warnings do not heighten the attraction of dangerous products for children's play.

The limits on the authority of the FCC or FTC to engage in rulemaking on a particular topic obviously pose no problem to such evaluation when it is sponsored by some other entity, but it is also likely that limits on rulemaking that are yet to be defined by the courts do not impose a barrier to the FCC or FTC studying the efficacy of industry procedures. Constitutional or statutory restrictions may bar certain kinds of rulemaking, but they would not appear to bar the collection of data in the absence of a specific rule whose legitimacy is yet to be tested in the courts. One reason is that the precise boundaries of FCC and FTC authority are ambiguous until subject to court test. Another is that a rulemaking intended to supplant a self-regulatory procedure might have the same intended outcome but could involve quite different mechanisms, so that the unacceptability of self-regulatory action as a model for a regulatory rule is not a sufficient argument to rule out the possibility of regulatory action. At the evaluation stage, the character of an eventual rulemaking would be unknown, and it is hard to conceive of a Constitutional or statutory restriction having much force in advance of the action purported to be at variance with it.

NONREGULATORY POLICYMAKING

It is in the nonregulatory sphere that social and behavioral science has its major influence. It provides an evidentiary framework within which the various actors that define policy operate, and has the potential to guide industry decisionmaking in regard to self-regulation and improving its service to the public.

"Family Viewing" and the Persistent Issue

Congress, the FCC, and the Industry. In 1974, the pressures on the FCC in regard to violence and sex on television were escalated sharply when the Congress instructed the FCC to report on "specific positive actions taken or planned by the Commission to protect children from excessive programming of violence and obscenity" (Broadcasting, October 21, 1974).

Chairman Richard E. Wiley, in the belief that the Communications Act of 1934 and the First Amendment left the agency without rule-making authority (The Ford Foundation, 1976), initiated a series of meetings with high level broadcasting executives, including the presidents of the three networks. Arthur Taylor, then president of CBS, advanced the concept of what came to be called "family viewing"--two hours of early evening programming during which "sex and violence" would be sharply curtailed. In 1975, the three networks and the National Association of Broadcasters adopted such a code and the Public Broadcasting System agreed to comply. The reform was as industry-wide as conceivable, with only the stations affiliated neither with the networks nor the NAB unaffected.

Public Response. The public appears to support the intent of the code. However, it appears to favor an even broader reduction in "sex and violence" than the code would achieve.

Nationwide polls both shortly after code adoption and six months later found about 80 percent of American adults saying they favor "family viewing," although a majority first needed it explained to them (Ryan, 1976). More than half of the public subscribes to the statement that "there is too much emphasis on sex on television"

and almost three-fourths subscribes to the statement that "there is too much violence on television."

However, experience with "family viewing" apparently was disappointing. Adults who believed it would improve television declined sharply (from 56 to 31 percent) as did parents who found it "very helpful" or "fairly helpful" (from 48 to 39 percent). Only one-fifth of adults believed there should be "stricter controls," only one-third believed "family viewing" should be continued, but fully half asserted that "sex and violence" should be reduced throughout the evening. In short, once informed about it, the public liked the "family viewing" concept, was somewhat disappointed in its execution, fully supports the goal of reducing "sex and violence" (over 80 percent favored either "family viewing" or more extensive reform), but is not ready to support action that sounds like censorship.

Court Intervention. The new code was immediately challenged in federal court in Los Angeles by Hollywood's television writers and producers, with the Federal Communications Commission, the National Association of Broadcasters, and the three networks as defendants, and on November 4, 1975, Federal Judge Warren G. Ferguson ruled in favor of the plaintiffs. The grounds were application of government duress, inappropriateness of FCC involvement without adherence to formal FCC procedures, and incompatibility with the First Amendment (Broadcasting, November 15, 1976). He declared that the industry-wide ban deprived broadcasters of their Constitutional prerogative to select programming independently, and ruled that the plaintiffs could sue for any economic damages suffered as a result of the policy. He did not in any way rule against "family viewing" when applied by the networks or by stations individually. What he struck down was a code adopted on an industry-wide basis as the result of government pressure which he characterized as the establishment of censorship.

The decision raises more issues than it settles. It is being appealed by the FCC and various portions of the industry. The networks declare they will continue as if the code had survived the court test. However, because of the judge's invalidation of

restraint on the prerogatives of individual broadcasters, the NAB ceased to require mandatory subscription to its code by members while simultaneously affirming the need for an industry-wide code.

New pressures for federal interference in programming will certainly be one result. Congress is expected to be insistent that some means be developed to reduce "sex and violence," and many expect Congress to test fully the protection offered by the First Amendment (Broadcasting, November 22, 1976). This is a particularly sensitive time for increased Congressional scrutiny because one of the tasks before the Congress is the possible rewriting of the Communications Act.

Policy Outcomes. Public opinion and federal court were not the only trials for "family viewing." There was also its record on the screen. It significantly reduced violence during the period affected (Gerbner et al., 1976; Columbia Broadcasting System, 1976). Programming changed, with an increase in situation comedy, general drama, and variety and a decrease in mystery/suspense, westerns, and feature films. There were no major changes in audience size or composition (A.C. Nielsen, 1976) although a slight increase in total audience is traceable to increased viewing by children and adolescents. A major question is whether the policy might not have the unintended effect of increasing content of the sort proscribed by implicitly designating the post-"family viewing" period as "adult viewing." The test has been too brief for a firm conclusion, but the early evidence favors such a cynical hypothesis for the fall declines in violence during the early evening saw an increase in subsequent hours.

There is also reason to be somewhat skeptical about the contribution of "family viewing" to the reduction of any undesirable social effects that television violence may have. Certainly the most plausible interpretation of the evidence is that television violence increases aggressiveness on the part of the young (Bandura, 1973; Berkowitz, 1962; Bogart, 1972; Chaffee, 1972; Comstock, 1976; Goranson, 1970; Krull and Watt, 1973; Liebert, Neale, and Davison, 1973; Shirley, 1973; Singer, 1971; Surgeon General's Scientific

Advisory Committee, 1972). A sizable number of laboratory-type experiments have demonstrated that television violence can be a cause of subsequent aggression immediately after viewing through a variety of processes, including the acquisition of new behavioral responses through observation, reduction of inhibitions, increases in the salience for aggression of environmental stimuli, and physiological arousal. A number of surveys have also found a correlation between prior violence viewing and aggression in everyday life not attributable either to a greater preference for violent entertainment on the part of aggressive persons or to the influence of various measured variables other than violence viewing. The causal interpretation rests on this convergence of the experimental demonstration of causal mechanisms and evidence of real-life association for which a non-causal explanation is not apparent. What the evidence does not make clear is the degree to which the increased aggressiveness translates into harmful social impact, which may be negligible or large. Furthermore, we do not know whether "family viewing" reduces violence below the threshold of harmful effect, either in its own time period or across the evening schedule.

The Persistent Issue. Since the 1950s, television violence has been the subject of seven major congressional hearings, and the focus of two major federal inquiries, the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (Baker and Ball, 1969) and the Surgeon General's Scientific Advisory Committee on Television and Social Behavior (1972). Yet, it is now attracting more attention than at any time in the past, and the intervals between its prominence as a public issue seem to be decreasing.

In 1976, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the national Parent-Teacher Association inaugurated campaigns against television violence. There was also a nascent advertiser's revolt, with several major corporations and the J. Walter Thompson advertising agency disassociating themselves from violent programming.

In addition, the advocacy group headed by former FCC commissioner Nicholas Johnson, the National Citizens Committee for Broadcasting,

employed a firm that monitors commercials to insure advertisers that they receive the airtime paid for to monitor violence. The result was an up-to-date, continuing correlation of violent portrayals with the advertisers associated with such programming, something beyond the scope of the annual measurement of the violence in one week of programming provided by Gerbner and his colleagues (Gerbner et al., 1976). The industry was aghast--at the ingenuity, and at the implications, for this approach made possible the linking of advertiser appearance with any measurable dimension of television content, opening the way for public pressure on advertisers on the one hand, and advertiser pressure on the industry on the other.

Many critics of violent television entertainment have argued for years that the industry would be most susceptible through advertisers. This is a proposition whose implications have never been carefully examined. It is far from clear that advertisers, who typically are conservative in regard to norms and values would make desirable censors, or that their censorship may not extend to other kinds of portrayals, with the long-term effect differing considerably from what many of those concerned about violence would desire.

The future in regard to content is also made problematical by the increasing abandonment of entertainment taboos, as exemplified by the hit of 1975-76, Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman. Much of the content--homosexuality, for example--would have been unacceptable a decade ago. This trend is probably a long-term outcome of television's continuing competition with motion pictures. A factor in the upward trend of violence in both media over the past decades (Clark and Blankenburg, 1972) has been their competition. With television now particularly constrained in regard to violence, it is likely that there will be increasing resort to social relations that are novel or startling but defensible as not primarily or blatantly "sexual." This is particularly so because the themes dear to newspaper advice columns and popular psychology thrive in the limited format of the dramatic or comedy series.

The Larger Lessons. Although the eventual fate of "family viewing" is unknown, it is clear that it represents an important

innovation in social effects policymaking by introducing a common restraint across broadcasters. This is perhaps the sole way to reshape programming in a system in which its makeup is governed by competition for the audience.

It is also clear that it is an example of policymaking in part traceable to the findings of social and behavioral science. The conclusion of Cater and Strickland (1975) that the Surgeon General's study of television violence had no effect on industry practice was premature. FCC Chairman Wiley has credited the Surgeon General's study with initiating the series of events which culminated in "family viewing" (The Ford Foundation, 1976). Although opinion and belief, in Congress and among the public, were certainly critical factors, the code certainly would not have come into existence had the support of scientific evidence been absent. Thus, "family viewing" illustrates one of the major ways in which social and behavioral science can influence television policymaking--not through its role in the rulemaking process, but by affecting the pressures on policymakers. Sometimes the outcome will be regulatory action, but more often it will be self-regulatory action taken to discourage regulation and placate critics.

The Industry as Central Actor

Because of the way broadcasting is organized in the United States, policymaking that directly affects programming typically involves the response of the industry to assorted pressures. As Larsen (1964) points out, the institutions of mass communication typically minimize the risk of interference by policing themselves.

The most publicized instrument is the Television Code of the National Association of Broadcasters and the guidelines developed in connection with it (National Association of Broadcasters, 1975; United States Congress, 1975), which sets forth standards for both programming and advertising. However, neither the NAB code nor any other codes has any meaningful mechanism for enforcement. The effective instrument is the broadcast standards department which interprets and applies such injunctions at each network.

The criteria for advertising, such as the prohibition of sales pitches by hosts or primary cartoon characters in children's programming, are fairly explicit. It is programming that involves the majority of decisionmaking.

The programming that newly appears on the screen each fall is the result of a complex process begun a year before. The three parties in the decisionmaking are the programming department of the network, the independent production companies which develop the programs for sale to the networks, and the network broadcast standards department. The critical decisions about survivors are made by the programming department. The actual programs are deeply affected by the decisions of producers and writers at the independent production companies. Both will have to satisfy the broadcast standards department.

At each of several stages, the evolving episode is reviewed by the broadcast standards departments and objections set forth in writing. The basic concept, the script and treatment (usually available in comic strip form in a "storyboard"), the "rough cut" (a version of the episode imperfect in sound and editing), and the final version are all subject to scrutiny. Eventually, all broadcasting is affected because much of what is shown by non-network stations are syndicated reruns originally produced under the conditions stipulated by the networks.

The self-regulatory mechanism of the broadcast standards departments is the sole systematic element in the multitude of decisions which lie behind any television program or advertisement. As a result, the mechanism provides a formal means by which pressures from the many parties involved in broadcasting can find expression.

It is important to understand that this expression can only be negative in direction. The separation of authority that has evolved between those responsible for production and those responsible for enforcing standards leaves no place for positive stipulations in behalf of certain kinds of portrayals. In fact, the incentive is to avoid such responsibility because it would greatly increase conflicts over the propriety of content.

Two Roles for Research. In these circumstances, social and behavioral science can influence the industry's social effects policy-making in two major ways. One is by compelling industry action, of which its attempt to reduce violence is an example. The other is by defining the corrective prohibitory steps the industry should take through the empirical experimental testing of the validity of the various rulings made by the broadcast standards departments.

There are already many findings in the research to date on the effects of violent portrayals on the aggressiveness of young viewers that bear on the kind of self-regulatory judgments being made. For example, it has been found that:

- The reward or lack of punishment in the portrayal for the perpetrator increases the likelihood of subsequent aggressiveness by the young viewer, while punishment decreases it (Rosekrans and Hartup, 1967; Bandura, 1965; Bandura, Ross and Ross, 1963).
- The presentation of the portrayed violence as justified increases the likelihood of subsequent aggressiveness by the young viewer (Berkowitz and Rawlings, 1963; Meyer, 1972).
- The inclusion of cues in the violent portrayal which match cues in real life environment, such as similarity of name of victim, increase the likelihood of subsequent aggressiveness by the young viewer (Berkowitz and Geen, 1966).
- The depicting of the perpetrator in a violent portrayal as similar to the viewer increases the likelihood of subsequent aggressiveness by the young viewer (Rosekrans, 1967).
- The depicting of a portrayal of violent interaction between persons as aggressive and motivated by intent to injure increases the likelihood of subsequent aggressiveness (Berkowitz and Alioto, 1973; Geen and Stonner, 1972).
- The depicting of a portrayal of violent interaction between persons as real rather than fiction increases the likelihood of subsequent aggressiveness (Feshbach, 1972).

- The presentation of highly exciting material of any kind increases the likelihood of subsequent aggressiveness when that is an appropriate response (Zillmann, 1971; Tannenbaum and Zillmann, 1975).

However, there has never been an effort to focus a series of studies on the empirical validity of the rulings made within the industry and there are many questions on which empirical evidence is lacking or not adequate for decisionmaking. Production-oriented research designed to answer the questions now settled intuitively would be a large step toward increasing the relevance of social and behavioral science in television policymaking.

A Third Challenge. There is a third and even more difficult challenge for social and behavioral science in directly enhancing the service rendered the public by television. Television broadcasting is a business engaged in the selling to advertisers of access to audiences, and largely it gains these audiences by the presentation of entertainment. However, it shares with other media a normative and self-acknowledged role to provide news and information, and to some degree to entertain in ways that are socially constructive. It is this norm of social responsibility that justifies the protection of the First Amendment and is the rationale for the regulation of scarce broadcast frequencies by the government.

Research and analysis conducted by the media to guide policy has focused on potential popularity of content. In television, this use of research extends not only to entertainment, but to the selection of on-the-air news personnel and the design of news and public affairs formats. This leaves untouched the more important question of the degree to which programming serves various public needs.

Of greatest use would be better evidence on the efficacy of current national television news. Network coverage typically treats news as episodic event, and emphasizes the event which is amenable to camera coverage. Yet, many rely largely on television for news and groups which are highly oriented toward television and less likely to supplement television with newspaper and magazine reading

include the less educated and blacks (Robinson, 1971; McCombs, 1968). The occasionally-reported lack of a correlation between television news exposure and public affairs knowledge (Patterson and McClure, 1976; Robinson, 1972) encourages the speculation that television as a sole news source is inadequate. The networks tacitly acknowledged the possibility by weighing in 1976 the doubling of the time allotted to early evening news, an innovation at least temporarily abandoned because of the opposition of affiliate stations, which find the time more profitable if programmed independently. The substitution of effectiveness for the present research criterion of popular acceptance could provide crucial evidence for constructive reform.

There is also a role for social and behavioral science in the shaping of entertainment by clarifying its psychological impact. It would be naive to argue that research could easily improve programming. Nevertheless, it is clear that television's producers and writers strive for what they perceive to be the most socially meaningful drama and comedy possible within a given format, and increased knowledge of the constructive and destructive roles of entertainment in people's lives conceivably could alter the conceptual framework they inhabit. Neither of these issues are likely to be directly addressed by the industry because its priorities inevitably lie in audience maximization. This places the challenge before academia, independent research centers, and the private foundations and government agencies which support their activities.

IN CONCLUSION

This analysis deals with the present system of American broadcasting. Although many advocate reforms, the system is likely to continue much as it is for reasons of sociology and politics. A society does not dismantle its major institutions in the absence of public displeasure, and usually that displeasure must reach the level of fury for such transformations to occur, and there is no evidence of great public dissatisfaction with television, and certainly no sign that any dissatisfaction that exists is accompanied by any widespread belief in the desirability of radical reform. Furthermore,

the present system has created in the broadcasters which benefit from it a very powerful set of vested interests opposed to any change.

The major source for change will certainly be the various technological developments--cable and pay television, in-home playback, and the delivery of special services and information into the home. Their eventual impact of course is unknown, but at present they are being accommodated slowly within the present framework. But even if the most radical of possible changes were to occur, social effects policymaking and the need for evidence on which to base it from social and behavioral science would continue because such policymaking is an inherent part of mass communications. If it is not the product of regulation, it will emanate from the desire of broadcasting to minimize the risk of external control by establishing rules and standards to avoid governmental or public wrath.

The pursuit of scientific evidence about the effects of mass communication sometimes seems to trouble people. When television is criticized for what it brings into the home, its defenders often assert that this is a case of "killing the messenger" because the medium, in news and entertainment, only reflects the society. They are quite right that the mass media are often the scapegoat for evils that originate elsewhere. Unfortunately, this view is sometimes accompanied by the belief that "hear no evil, see no evil" is a proper attitude toward evidence of media's effects. The argument is that research is dangerous to free expression because it may end in restrictions on what can be communicated. It is hopefully true that the demonstration of an undesirable effect may alter the decisions that enter into television programming. What the argument overlooks is that there is never a time when decisions are not being made about what is acceptable. Given this fact, it is better that such decisions be based on knowledge than made in ignorance.

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